



the good coffee

In 2005 we found great espresso at Monmouth Coffee (Covent Garden) and Monmouth (Borough Market). If there were more good cafés, we never found out about them!

Six years on, we're happy to report a totally different café scene in London.

While a good proportion of coffee in the UK is still below average, there is a small but very rapidly growing coffee community that's truly exceptional. For years, Australians and New Zealanders have been taking the credit for a number of the good coffee spots in London. However, the British have been making impressive progress under their own steam for some time now.

We still recommend the two Monmouth cafés, but you can add a whole lot of others to your list of places to visit when in London.

We recommend Flat White, Nude or one of the Fernandez and Wells outlets (around Soho), Kaffeine or Tapped & Packed (in Fitzrovia), Dose (opposite Smithfield Market), The Espresso Room (Bloomsbury), Taylor Street Baristas (two locations on the city side of Liverpool Street Station), Caravan (Exmouth Market), Look Mum No Hands! (Old Street) and Climpson & Sons Café (Broadway Market).

One new precinct we found this year is Leather Lane – with three exceptional places. There is the so-called Department of Coffee & Social Affairs, the new Prufrock and a great coffee cart in between.

If you are travelling to London and are interested in drinking coffee as much as seeing the sights, I recommend you grab the London Coffee Guide, an A-Z (from newsagents in the handy pocket size), mark in the locations above for your coffee breaks – and

plan your sightseeing accordingly. Because there is a lack of places on the western side of London, I also recommend you stay somewhere closer to the east – if you want an early morning coffee before a ride on the Underground. It's less touristy anyway!

You will find a wonderful collaborative spirit among coffee people in London. All the baristas in these recommended places know each other and will happily point you in the direction of the next café. Gwilym Davies, a true Londoner, might be known to most as the 2009 World Barista Champion, but to anyone who aspires to serving good coffee, he is also their friend. Gwilym (or his staff) will serve you the best espresso or cappuccino you are likely to find anywhere. And it is never too much trouble for him to show others how he does it.

We always considered Prufrock the end of our coffee pilgrimage in London and St Ali the same when in Melbourne. Now St Ali has opened in London. It's not in a tiny back street location without signage like in Melbourne; it's on busy Clerkenwell Road – with lights that make it look like the entry to a West End show. And what a performance you'll find inside! Angela the manager greeted us with a warm Aussie welcome and while chatting with us, was able to keep an eye on about 6 staff and 20 customers – all at the same time. This place buzzes with success and is testimony to the fact that an exceptional experience is about great people and special ambience, as much as it is about the coffee.

The trends are pretty much the same as in Australia, with lots of single origins on offer. Pour overs and syphons are regular options. Double ristrettos for every beverage are advertised in many places. One thing we did notice about London was a tendency towards lighter roasts and higher acidity than we are used to in Australia.

Sad to say, though, the flat white (the beverage with its unsexy and unappetising name) has been given new life – just when we thought it might be on its way out in Australia. I have been 'willing it away' for years now – so we can finally tidy up our coffee menus and clear up the confusion. But there we have it, large as life again – all over the UK. If you dare to announce you are Australian before ordering, you might be offered a flat white by a barista who is keen to be friendly. Along with all the Australians in London asking for flat whites, the guys at a great little Soho café in Berwick Street are responsible. They have named their café Flat White and have an explanation of what one is on their wall.

One of our reasons for being in London was to follow up on interest generated in the Perfect Espresso books and training resources at last year's Caffe Culture Expo and the World Barista Championships.

At Caffe Culture 2011, we were again impressed with the number of international exhibitors and visitors – in what has become the UK's premier event for the café industry. As well as the usual machines and beans on exhibit, there were more teas, cakes and

cookies than you could imagine possible. And us with books!

With the Bath Coffee Festival a week after the London event, we took the opportunity to whizz across on the train to experience a truly country (or should we say county) affair, complete with rugby match, picnic in the sun, plenty of coffee roasters from all over the UK – and cappuccino stout! We also visited Colonna and Smalls, a great little café in Bath run by one of the UK's regional barista champions.

At these events, there were two topics people were talking about a lot more this year – with the science and equipment to back up what good baristas have known for ages. One is water quality and its effect on extraction. The other is the measurability of the extraction process.

Also while in England, we were introduced to cascara by Steve Leighton at Has Bean Coffee. Cascara is the dried skin of the coffee berry and can be made into an infusion that is highly caffeinated. To our surprise, it tasted ok – similar to a fruit tea. The following week, we heard that Alejandro Mendez, the new 2011 World Barista Champion, used cascara in his winning signature beverage. So we may hear more about this intriguing product in the future.

nude
espresso

ALL OUR SHOTS ARE SERVED
AS DOUBLE RISTRETTO.

ESPRESSO	2.00
MACCHIATO	2.00
PICCOLO	2.20
LONG BLACK	2.20
AMERICANO	2.50
FLAT WHITE	2.50/3.00
LATTE	2.50/3.00
CAPPUCCINO	2.50
MOCHA	3.00
HOT CHOCOLATE	3.00
ICED LATTE	3.00
EXTRA SHOT	.50
SOY	.50
DECAF	.50



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